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Facilitator Control as Automatic Behavior: A Verbal Behavior Analysis

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Several studies of facilitated communication have demonstrated that the facilitators were controlling and directing the typing, although they appeared to be unaware of doing so. Such results shift the focus of analysis to the facilitator's behavior and raise questions regarding the controlling variables for that behavior. This paper analyzes facilitator behavior as an instance of automatic verbal behavior, from the perspective of Skinner's (1957) book *Verbal Behavior*. Verbal behavior is automatic when the speaker or writer is not stimulated by the behavior at the time of emission, the behavior is not edited, the products of behavior differ from what the person would produce normally, and the behavior is attributed to an outside source. All of these characteristics appear to be present in facilitator behavior. Other variables seem to account for the thematic content of the typed messages. These variables also are discussed.

Facilitated communication (FC) is purported to be an augmentative communication method in which two people, a facilitator and a person with autism or developmental disabilities, type together on a keyboard or letterboard. In most cases, the facilitator helps the disabled person isolate an index finger, if necessary, and provides physical support to the hand, wrist, or forearm to allow the person to type out messages.

FC, as it has been widely practiced, involves certain assumptions. One assumption is that most seemingly nonverbal people with autism (including those previously considered low functioning) are actually "competent and literate." That is, autistic individuals can read and write and engage in other forms of verbal behavior on a covert level, but fail to display these behaviors because of innate motor planning problems (i.e., "global apraxia"). FC has been viewed as a physical accommodation to a neuromotor disability rather than a teaching technique. Although this theory specifies people with autism, FC also has been widely used with developmentally disabled individuals.

Despite widespread claims of "astonishing communications" obtained via FC, most controlled studies have failed to validate the method. A summary of studies reported in the (1993) *Autism Research Review* indicates that in 34 of 43 studies (and in 316 of 334 participants) there was no evidence that the people being facilitated were emitting verbal behavior via FC. Among these, certain studies demonstrated that the facilitators were doing the typing. For instance, Wheeler, Jacobson, Paglieri, and Schwartz (1993) and Hudson, Melita, and Arnold (1993) showed that when the facilitator and the disabled person were presented with *different* pictures or questions, the typed output corresponded to what the *facilitator*, not the disabled person, saw or heard. Although the facilitators were clearly controlling the typing, there was no evidence that they were aware of doing so.

The fact that facilitators often control and direct the typing has been called "facilitator influence," which seems to be a misnomer. "Facilitator influence" suggests that the disabled person is emitting verbal

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behavior, and the facilitator is exerting partial control (or "influence") over that behavior. Although partial control certainly may occur when fading prompts within structured teaching programs, such control has not been demonstrated in most cases of FC. Rather than *influencing* the typed messages, the facilitator appears to be the sole author of those messages. Thus, the focus of analysis is shifted from the disabled person's behavior to the facilitator's behavior.

This paper will analyze the behavior of the facilitator from the perspective of Skinner's (1957) book *Verbal Behavior* and address the following questions: How is it possible for facilitators to "unconsciously" carry on complex conversations with themselves (i.e., engage in self-intraverbal behavior) day after day, week after week, and month after month? How can they produce surprising and unexpected messages (including physical and sexual abuse allegations), and attribute these messages to the disabled person? What variables may control the thematic content of the typed messages?

In conducting this analysis, material will be taken from the occult/metaphysical literature on "channeling" (which includes Ouija as well as automatic writing and speaking) and the behavioral literature (primarily, Skinner's analysis of automatic verbal behavior). These sources complement one another in revealing the characteristics of facilitator behavior and the behavioral processes involved. The channeling literature provides detailed descriptions of phenomena which are highly similar, if not identical, to FC. The behavioral literature describes behavioral processes that seem to be operating in automatic verbal behavior, and, by implication, in facilitator behavior.

Before proceeding with the analysis, it will be useful to briefly distinguish between the various channeling phenomena (i.e., forms of automatic behavior) which overlap with facilitator behavior, and indicate how they are related to one another. In Ouija, two people move their hands together to spell out messages on some type of letterboard. Ouija is a type of automatic writing. In automatic writing, one or more people write. The mode of writing is irrelevant, although the person may write with a pen or pencil, typewriter, computer, or Ouija board. Automatic writing, in turn, seems to be a form of channeling (i.e., automatic behavior, in general). In channeling, one or more individuals engage in verbal or nonverbal behavior, and the mode of responding is irrelevant. Common types of channeling include automatic speaking (i.e., "direct voice channeling"), writing, painting, playing music, and improvisational acting.

One automatic phenomenon which seems virtually indistinguishable from facilitator behavior is Ouija board operation. As Dillon (1993) explains:

> FC and Ouija share many of the same physical components. Both typically use a board with alpha-numeric characters....The other component of both classical Ouija and FC is a pointer. In the case of Ouija, traditionally, a small three-pointed planchette is used with the fingers resting lightly on it; however, anything can be used that can slide over the surface of the board with the subject's fingers resting on it....In the case of FC, the pointer is the finger of the subject, and the facilitator lightly supports that finger or some part of the subject's arm. (p. 282)

Given that FC appears to be a type of Ouija, explanations of Ouija board use seem applicable to facilitator behavior. One explanation, the "automatistic" theory, suggests that Ouija board use is an automatism, which is defined in the dictionary as "an action performed without the doer's intention or awareness" (Hunt, 1985, pp. 8-9). Hunt further explains, "While the Ouija operator's conscious mind denies controlling the planchette, it is really the operator's subconscious mind controlling the muscles in the hand and arm..." (p.9)

Hastings (1991) provides a similar explanation of Ouija board use. He writes:

> There is no question that the movements of the pointer come from the person operating the board, not consciously, but with their hands responding to dissociated subconscious direction. Usually it is one particular person who is the essential party in the process and through which the messages come. It is always the case that the communications are influenced by that individual. (pp. 128-129)

A more general phenomenon which seems to include facilitator behavior and Ouija is automatic writing. Descriptions of automatic writing provide further clues as to the characteristics of facilitator behavior. According to Hunt (1985):

> Automatic writing occurs without the writer's conscious involvement. Although what is being written may be perfectly comprehensible, even brilliant, there is no conscious thought behind the ideas expressed; nor is the pen or paper deliberately moved by the writer....Automatic writing is not a deliberate act, can occur spontaneously, and is usually done while the writer's consciousness is deliberately turned to an activity other than the automatic writing itself. (p. 15)

The products of automatic writing also have certain characteristics. As Hunt indicates, "The style and content of automatic writing is...different from one's normal everyday writing. In some cases, both the style and content are superior to what the writer can produce normally." (pp. 16-17). These characteristics also are found in the messages produced via FC.

Another feature of automatic behavior is that the products of behavior are attributed to an outside source. This fact is significant, because assertions by facilitators that they "feel strongly" that the messages are coming from the disabled individuals have been taken as anecdotal evidence for the validity of FC. Dillon (1993) has discussed this phenomenon in relation to FC and Ouija:

> In both FC and Ouija...the facilitators or persons using the planchette swear they are not guiding the pointing, but that the movement comes from something other than their own volition. In the case of FC, the movement is said to be coming from the subject; in Ouija, it is said to be coming from either the spiritual realm or the subject's unconscious. (p. 282)

In discussing automatic verbal behavior, Skinner (1957) has noted the same phenomenon. According to Skinner:

> When feed-back from verbal behavior has been lacking at the time of emission and when the speaker or writer is then faced with evidence of that behavior, he is likely to attribute it to another person. He not only has no memory of having produced it, but the unedited material may be so strange or objectionable as to be unrecognizable. (p. 390)

Skinner also has specified the type of outside sources to which messages may be attributed: "When evidence of personal participation is inescapable, there is a tendency to assign the work to supernatural forces....The modern spiritualistic medium often claims to be speaking with the voice of a dead person. Great religious works are often said to have been dictated by God." (p. 391)

Interestingly, this phenomenon also occurs in psychotic verbal behavior, which often seems to involve automatic speaking. Burns, Heiby and Tharp (1983) explain how psychotic individuals may mishear their own subvocal behavior or other stimuli as "voices" and attribute them to a source outside themselves. Burns et al. write:

> With the mislabeling of external and internal stimuli as voices, it is reasonable that delusional systems are produced to explain the cause of such behavior. It also follows that the explanations are in keeping with the times. Hence, in former days the voices may have been attributed to spirits or to God(s). At present, attributing the sources of the voices to television sets and radios is common. (p. 140)

In addition to describing the characteristics of automatic verbal behavior, Skinner (1957) has suggested some of the behavioral processes that may be operating. He writes:

> An inability to respond to one's own verbal behavior or to controlling variables is most marked in certain conditions of the organism, of which sleep is the commonest example. Most people speak occasionally while asleep; but the behavior does not affect the speaker as listener and is not edited. Similar conditions exist in the spontaneously or hypnotically induced trance. Verbal behavior under such circumstances is called "automatic." The commonest case is automatic writing, where it is easy to prevent the subject from being stimulated by his own behavior...but automatic talking is also possible. (p. 388)

Thus, verbal behavior is "automatic" when someone is not stimulated by his or her own behavior. The person cannot predict the behavior, fails to notice it at the time of emission, and fails to edit the behavior, producing material which may seem strange or unexpected. Although automatic behavior is often said to "come from the unconscious," it can be explained without appealing to hypothetical mental entities.

One might ask how someone could emit verbal behavior without noticing it. This

may be accomplished in various ways. Skinner (1957) mentions one technique for generating automatic writing, as follows: "In a psychological experiment conducted at Harvard University, Gertrude Stein and Leon M. Solomons found it possible to generate automatic writing simply by allowing the subject to make random writing movements while engaging in other activities such as reading a book." (p. 389)

In general, a person makes random writing movements while engaging in some other so-called "distracting" behavior. Behaviors which tend to produce this restricted stimulus control include reading an interesting book, watching an intense movie, driving a car, working at the computer, and meditating (i.e., sitting very still and emitting covert visual behavior or repeating a mantra). While engaging in one of these behaviors, someone may respond to a very limited range of stimuli, and is often said to be in a "trance" or "state of intense concentration." For instance, someone working at the computer may fail to respond to stimuli associated with the passage of time. While engaged in some such behavior, a person may emit random writing motions and begin to write "automatically"; that is, the arm seems to write by itself.

A key concept in automatic writing is Skinner's notion of "self-editing." When the writer is not stimulated by his or her own verbal behavior, editing does not occur, and the products of behavior may seem strange or unexpected. Self-editing is a product of a punishment history. When a certain type of verbal behavior has been punished, a person may come to withhold behaviors of that class before they are emitted overtly. For instance, a person may have some tendency to make a hostile remark to his or her boss. However, because of prior punishment for similar remarks made to people in positions of authority, the person may "edit" or withhold the comment, thus escaping conditioned aversive stimulation (or "anxiety"), and avoiding actual punishment. The same process may occur in writing. Someone might either withhold a response and not write it at all, or cross it out after it is written. Whether the process occurs with speaking, writing, or any other mode of verbal behavior, Skinner refers to it as "self-editing."

In discussing self-editing (or lack of it), it is also necessary to describe the *type* of verbal behavior involved. Editing may occur with any of the verbal operants (i.e., mands, tacts, intraverbals, etc.). In automatic verbal behavior, the relevant behavior appears to be largely self-intraverbal, with a small amount of self-echoic control, to use Skinner's terms. Self-intraverbal behavior is roughly equivalent to carrying on a conversation with oneself; self-echoic behavior is equivalent to repeating oneself. The facilitator or channeler primarily carries on a conversation with him or herself, generating long or short chains of unedited verbal behavior, and performing the functions of both speaker and listener.

Relaxed self-editing seems to be a critical aspect of facilitator control. Facilitators may fail to respond to their own typing behavior; that is, they cannot predict which keys will be selected and do not notice themselves initating motion towards particular keys. As in automatic writing, this lack of "self-awareness" may occur because the facilitator is emitting some other behavior at the same time which generates restricted stimulus control. For instance, Barker, Leary, Repa, and Whissell (1992, pp. 9-12) specify the various behaviors involved in facilitating. These include holding the person's hand so that the index finger is isolated, positioning the person's arm, providing backwards pressure as each letter is selected, pulling the person's hand back after each selection, pulling back from obvious errors and perseverative patterns, and establishing and maintaining a typing rhythm. Facilitators also need to treat the person as competent and respond to any behavioral difficulties that may arise. It appears that facilitators have plenty to do, and may be intensely focused on the disabled person and on the keyboard. Under such conditions, it seems quite possible that they would fail to notice their own behavior (i.e., would not "feel"

that they were doing the typing) and would fail to edit the behavior. The unedited material might then seem strange or "uncharacteristic" of the facilitators and be attributed to the disabled individuals.

Lack of editing may explain some instances in which facilitators or channelers produce material containing seemingly unknown information. Information that the facilitator or channeler "could not possibly have known" is one of the most common sources of anecdotal evidence for these respective phenomena. Despite the inherent problems of anecdotal reports, the phenomenon of producing seemingly unknown information may be genuine. Individuals may produce such information for the same reasons that they produce strange and unexpected messages. In automatic verbal behavior, behavior is "unconscious" in the sense that the individual is not stimulated by that behavior at the time of emission and the behavior is not edited. Some automatic behavior is potentially punishable and would not occur under normal conditions of editing. If it rarely occurs, the individual may be unaware that it is in his or her repertoire. When self-editing is suspended and the behavior finally does occur, the products of behavior may contain seemingly unknown information.

Another type of seemingly unknown information is described by FC proponents Haskew and Donnellan (1992). They write:

> Reports that facilitated communicators are able to read their facilitators' and other people's minds surface wherever facilitated communication is attempted....A young man we know told his facilitator what her high school nickname was, and that she had a deceased relative who had been a musician. He was correct in every detail, including her feelings about her uncle. A mother told us about the adjustments she had made knowing that she can have no secrets from her teenage daughter. And another mother told us that her adult son has no need to hear what she and his other two facilitators want him to know; he simply types his responses to their unspoken comments. (p. 9)

In these examples, the typed messages contained information known to the facilitator, but unknown to the disabled person. Such messages would only be surprising if someone assumed that the disabled individual was doing the typing. If the facilitator was doing the typing but believed that the disabled person was actually the author of the messages, it is quite clear how the disabled person might appear to know her high school nickname and how she felt about her deceased uncle. Of course, the faciltator would be typing her own nickname and her feelings about her uncle. Likewise, if the facilitator was doing the typing, it could easily look like the disabled person was responding to the facilitator's unspoken comments. But, it would actually be the facilitator responding to his or her own unspoken comments.

Lack of editing in automatic verbal behavior may explain a common feature of FC and Ouija noted by Dillon (1993). She mentions that in both FC and Ouija, the messages produced "often contain typographical errors, phonetic spellings, or unusual utterances" (p. 284). Skinner (1957) also mentions that automatic writing may be "ungrammatical, childish, hackneyed, or trivial" (p. 389). Skinner's (1934) article "Has Gertrude Stein a Secret?" describes a type of automatic writing which was said to lack "connected thought." It is easy to see how relaxed self-editing could produce this type of material.

At other times, however, the products of automatic verbal behavior may be complex and sophisticated. Hunt (1985) has noted that in some cases of automatic writing, "both the style and content are superior to what the writer can produce normally" (p. 17). Dillon (1993) also mentions that in both Ouija and FC, there may be a large quantity of highly complex material, sometimes produced very quickly. Dillon gives an example of such a case, where large amounts of complex material were produced through the Ouija board. She writes:

> In one extraordinary case, Pearl Curran was able over a five-year period working with the Ouija board to dictate 29 bound volumes (4,375 single-spaced pages) of conversation in the form of epigrams, poems, allegories, short stories, plays, and full-length novels. For one of her novels, she was able to dictate the last chapter of 6,000 words in a single evening through the Ouija board. (p. 284)

The fact that the material may be produced quickly and in large quantities seems clearly attributable to relaxed self-

editing. When special conditions suspend the effects of punishment, behavior may occur at high rates. Under certain conditions, it is also conceivable that relaxed self-editing might yield more complex and sophisticated material. Perhaps a person engages in very strict stylistic editing, because of prior punishment for poor style. A high rate of such editing would seem to interfere with intraverbal behavior and thematic control. If such editing was relaxed, more varied and interesting written material might be produced. In general, the effects of relaxed self-editing may depend on the unique punishment history of the individual and the aspects of the material that are usually edited. If the person typically edits spelling and grammar, these characteristics may suffer when editing is suspended, but other aspects might conceivably improve.

Although relaxed self-editing is an important element of automatic verbal behavior, it does not seem to determine the specific thematic content of the messages that are produced.

One source of thematic control is mentioned in the channeling literature on inspirational writing. Inspirational writing is a variation of automatic writing where the individual focuses on some theme or "ideal" while attempting to write. That is, the person may write an "ideal" statement (such as "to help others") and read it, or repeat the statement covertly, then attempt to write. Reed (1989) describes inspirational writing, as follows:

> Begin your experiment with inspirational writing by a period of meditation. When you feel that you have entered into the spirit of your ideal, then begin your writing. Don't concern yourself about what you will write, simply write....One way to get started the first time is simply to write out your ideal. Perhaps you begin with a single word or a phrase. Maybe you'll find yourself just writing that again and again. Whatever you write, it doesn't matter. (pp. 118-119)

In inspirational writing, the individual engages in a behavior which generates restricted stimulus control while at the same time attempting to write. Nevertheless, the behavior which generates restricted stimulus control is *not* simply a distracting behavior like reading an interesting book; rather, it consists of focusing on a theme (i.e., writing or repeating an "ideal" statement). This ideal statement may be a source of thematic control for the writing behavior, and may partially explain why the writing may be judged superior to what the individual usually produces. If the writing reflects some idealistic theme, it might be tacted as more "profound" than writing which lacks such a theme.

In FC, the facilitator also states certain ideals or a particular ideology. Perhaps the facilitator makes covert self-statements about the value of full inclusion, the competence and intelligence of the disabled person, and the validity and importance of FC. Again, such statements may be a source of thematic control for the typing behavior. Many of the typed messages produced via FC contain themes related to these ideals, such as wanting to be seen as smart, wanting to be in a normal classroom, wanting to be treated with respect, wanting to study regular academic subjects, wanting to have normal friendships, and wanting to show everyone that FC is real. Interestingly, the messages produced via channeling often contain themes related to New Age ideals of spiritual development, personal growth, the nature of the universe and of reality, reincarnation, world peace, universal love, helping others, etc.

A second source of thematic control for automatic verbal behavior may be the questions asked in the channeling or FC sessions. In Ouija, automatic writing, and direct voice channeling, the channeler poses questions to a visualized "entity" such as a spirit guide and produces answers to those questions through one of many possible verbal modes. In FC, the facilitator poses questions to a nonverbal disabled person and types the answers to those questions. In both cases, the themes of the questions often determine the themes of the answers.

An additional source of thematic control may be the visualized or stated characteristics of the so-called "entity" in channeling and the inferred characteristics or moods of the disabled person in FC. Roman and

Packer (1987) suggest some possible characteristics of spirit guides. They write:

> Now let your guide come fully into your aura. Your guide's vibration is very light, loving, and wise, and you will probably feel a loving presence overshadowing you....Notice your emotions. There is often a sense of compassion as we join with you, for we are beings of love. (pp. 84-85)

If the channeler has read or heard that spirit guides are loving and wise, the person's channeled verbal behavior may contain wise and loving themes. Similarly, visualized or stated characteristics of *particular* spirit guides might also exert thematic control. If the channeler says that a given spirit guide has a sense of humor, the subsequent messages might contain humorous themes.

Similar processes seem to occur in FC. Inferred characteristics or moods of the disabled person may control the thematic content of the typed messages. For instance, if a disabled person begins vocalizing loudly and engaging in vigorous hand flapping, a staff member who works with the person might say that he or she is "upset." If the staff member then facilitates with the person, the typed messages may contain themes related to being upset (e.g., the person is upset because a favorite staff member is on vacation). Or, if a disabled person is typically cooperative and pleasant, staff may describe that person as "polite." The facilitated messsages may then contain words such as "please" and "thank you."

An additional source of thematic control for the messages produced via FC may be the observed or inferred circumstances of the disabled person and the facilitator's *own* reactions to those circumstances. For instance, suppose a facilitator visited a disabled person at his or her group home and noted that there were very few structured activities and people were just "sitting around." If the *facilitator* found such circumstances boring, subsequent messages might include themes of boredom and wishing to move. Or, if the facilitator and disabled person were engaged in an FC session with a skeptic present as an observer and the *facilitator* began to feel nervous, the messages might contain themes of wanting to know who the skeptic was, wanting the person to leave, or perhaps wanting to end the session. Such messages would, of course, be attributed to the disabled person.

Determining the sources of thematic control may be especially perplexing in cases of physical or sexual abuse allegations. Many such allegations, obtained via FC, have been directed towards the parents, family members, teachers, and caretakers of individuals being facilitated. Not only are such allegations common, but they may be lengthy, detailed, and pornographic. Several sources of thematic control for these messages appear possible. If the facilitator had read or heard that disabled people are frequently abused, or inferred for whatever reason that the person being facilitated had been abused, themes of abuse may appear in the typed messages. Another possibility is that the *facilitator* was abused. Under the relaxed conditions of self-editing present in FC, verbal behavior concerning prior abuse (punishable under ordinary conditions) might emerge.

Additional variables may control not the themes of the messages, but whether automatic verbal behavior is emitted at all. In both channeling and FC, it is said that participants must have a "positive attitude" and believe in the phenomenon (i.e., emit positive self-statements) for it to "work." As noted by Dillon (1993), "The argument is often made that a skeptic cannot become a facilitator" (p. 284). The same is true of channeling, as explained by Roman and Packer (1987): "Those who are not ready to become channels usually know it, and they are quite clear that channeling is not for them. They may not have the preparation at soul level. They may not have a world view that encompasses channeling as a possibility. Their skepticism serves to keep them from it until they are ready." (p. 24)

Skeptics may be unable to channel or facilitate because they do not suspend the self-editing process. The "distracting" behavior mentioned earlier that may generate restricted stimulus control and allow self-editing to be suspended might not have the usual effect with skeptics, per-

haps because they cannot attribute their behavior to another source. When they hear or see the products of their own verbal behavior, such products may be aversive. They may "feel foolish," as it were, typing for a disabled person or attempting to channel, since the behavior can only be attributed to themselves. This conditioned aversive stimulation may automatically punish the verbal behavior which is emitted.

The mere *presence* of skeptics may also have a suppressive effect on the behavior of the channeler or the facilitator. Roman and Packer (1987) explain this effect in relation to channeling, as follows:

> It has been important to the development of many well-known channels to keep their channeling initially within a circle of supportive friends. A warm, personal environment is more conducive to awakening and opening people's channeling abilities than a cold, clinical, or judgmental environment. Start by channeling for people who have a basic belief in the process, not for people who you have to convince that channeling is real....Inexperienced channels can feel other people's doubts and fears so strongly that it often shuts down the connection to their (spirit) guide. (p. 197)

This audience effect also may occur with the facilitator in FC. When there is a skeptical audience (and thus the potential for punishment), the facilitator may be unable to type fluently. This effect is typically attributed to the disabled person. When the *facilitator* cannot produce meaningful messages under these conditions, it is inferred that the *disabled person* cannot communicate, because the person is in a "confrontational situation," is under "too much pressure," or his or her "confidence has been destroyed."

Other variables may be responsible for the seemingly "obsessional" properties of automatic behavior. According to Dillon (1993), there is a seductive quality to FC and Ouija that can lead to obsessional and exclusionary activity. With respect to Ouija, Dillon provides a relevant quotation from Hunt (1985), who writes: "The more suggestible a "player," the more dangerous the Ouija game. In early stages of obsession or possession, the victim becomes inceasingly reliant on the Ouija board. He craves more and more revelations....Soon the messages become the experimenter's sole interest. Normal activites and relationships become less important and even boring." (pp. 81-82)

FC may evoke the same type of obsessional behavior. After FC has been initiated, facilitators may spend more and more of their time performing the activity. Other communication systems and/or behavioral teaching methods may appear less interesting and come to be used less often. As noted by Dillon (1993), "There is a passionate excitement associated with the 'discovery' or notion that a person once thought to be retarded may in fact be a genius who just needed a way to communicate" (pp. 286-287). Further, FC is not just a technique. It is an ideology and involves a specific subculture or verbal community, much like channeling. Not only are the typed messages themselves highly reinforcing (because they seem to produce unknown information and "unexpected literacy skills"), but interactions with others in the FC community who hold similar views and share a similar excitement about the process may be highly reinforcing.

In addition to similarities in the behavioral processes involved, there are striking parallels in the way people talk about FC and the various channeling phenomena. Such parallels lend further credence to the notion that these phenomena are highly similar, if not identical. One parallel is that both FC and channeling have been said to change entire belief systems. For instance, it is said that FC has changed people's beliefs about the nature of autism. All of our previous information on autism might be wrong; our entire belief system about the nature of disabilities and how learning occurs may need to be revised. As Haskell and Donnellan (1992) indicate: "Suffice to say that even peripheral exposure to FC quickly dispells doubts regarding the authenticity of the medium, while exposure in depth raises profound questions about the nature of literacy and what we commonly think of as learning and knowing" (p. 4).

Compare this to a statement made of channeling. According to Roman and Packer (1987):

> Channeling is one of those areas in which society's beliefs have been too long unexamined, and they are beginning to be re-examined by many people like you. Channeling challenges people to examine their beliefs about the nature of reality, and offers great potential for expanding mankind's view of what is possible. It brings people in contact with ideas that are on the frontiers of what mankind can "prove" at this point in its evolution. (p. 205)

A second point of similarity is the anti-science ideology that exists in both FC and channeling. In FC, the large number of controlled studies which have failed to validate FC and have shown that the facilitator is doing the typing have been disregarded and/or attacked by many FC proponents. This is in spite of the fact that many studies carefully addressed the various objections to testing made by Douglas Biklen and others. The anti-science ideology that exists in FC is summarized by Haskew and Donnellan (1992), as follows:

> All facilitators make periodic validity checks to satisfy their own curiosity by asking questions to which they do not know the answers, and have their doubts put to rest by spontaneous communication of information new to them. While this may not qualify for the scientific record, when it happens thousands of times in hundreds of locations the researchers' tasks should shift from questioning the existence of FC to analyzing the process and pursuing the implications....There is no further need to see academics embarrass themselves by reporting that they can not document or make predictable a procedure that thousands of people are using with profit every day. (p. 3)

With respect to channeling, Roman and Packer (1987) present a very similar argument. They write:

> As my scientist side looks at channeling now, although I "know" a lot about it, I still can't prove it scientifically. There is a wealth of circumstantial and indirect evidence, enough to prove to me that something is happening, something that we cannot explain from our present perspective of reality. I can observe that it produces positive results on a consistent basis. I have stopped trying to "prove" channeling is real, and now use a more business-oriented approach: "If it works, use it." (p. 207)

In conclusion, facilitator behavior appears to be a form of channeling (i.e., automatic verbal behavior). Automatic behavior has been discussed primarily by parapsychologists, but also by Skinner. As noted by Hastings (1991), this type of behavior is not new; varieties of channeling have occurred in all cultures throughout recorded history, and have been called prophecy, oracle, revelation, spirit communication, mediumship, possession, and the inspiration of the muses. Such behavior has generated an inordinate amount of interest, undoubtedly because it generates strange and unexpected material and seems to come from an outside source. Ouija, which is structurally and functionally identical to facilitator behavior, has been prevalent in and of itself. According to Hunt (1985), Ouija-like instruments have been re-invented many times in a variety of different contexts. In the United States, there have been Ouija crazes in the thirties, forties, and sixties. FC appears to be the most recent re-invention of Ouija.

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